



**REPORT**

# Because of Her Story Internship Program Evaluation

**PREPARED BY**

Kera Collective

**FOR**

American Women's History Initiative (AWHI), Smithsonian  
Institution

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BECAUSE OF HER STORY

 Smithsonian

## PREPARED FOR

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# 01 Discussion



The following discussion is framed around the intended mid- and long-term outcomes for interns of the American Women’s History Initiative (AWHI’s) *Because of Her Story* (BOHS) Internship Program as defined in the Impact Framework (see Appendix A). Unsurprisingly for a baseline study, the internship is excelling at most of the mid-term outcomes but has room for growth in the long-term outcomes (which will continue to emerge as time passes for past interns).

### MID-TERM OUTCOMES (6 MONTHS–3 YEARS AFTER INTERNSHIP)

#### Focus their academic or professional path forward ★★☆☆

The internship excels at helping participants identify their strengths and clarify the next steps of their academic or professional journey. Data across the survey, interviews, and diary study all indicate interns felt their experience helped them hone in on their interests (as well as things they are *not* interested in). Projects matched interns’ strengths but also pushed them out of their “comfort zone” and into new territory; moreover, the internship exposed them to a wide range of roles across the Smithsonian network. Ultimately, these factors helped interns feel confident defining their path forward. However, a few interns suggested adding goal setting with mentors at the beginning of the internship experience to align expectations and create a concrete “game plan” to keep the internship experience on track.

#### Benefit from the support of a professional network ★★☆☆

The internship successfully helps interns not only begin building a professional network of peers and mentors, but also equips interns with the skills to continue building their network after the internship. The cohort model is integral to helping internship develop a peer support network with other interns. Diary study and interview data show that many, though not all, have maintained connections with their cohort after the internship. Similarly, many have stayed connected to their mentors and other professionals they connected with through their internship experience for professional advice and references. And, interns expressed newfound confidence in networking following the internship across survey, interview, and diary study data—for example, the statement about building networking skills was the highest rated of any statement in the survey (mean rating of 4.6 on a scale of 1 to 5).

Still, there is also a clear desire for more support to build deeper connections with their cohort during and after the internship. For example, among a list of statements about their professional network in the survey, the statement about maintaining meaningful connections with other interns after the internship was rated lowest (although it still received a strong overall rating). And, in interviews, past interns suggested more informal opportunities to get to know one another and were excited about the idea of an alumni network that would help them maintain cohort relationships and foster continued professional development.

### **Are change-makers in their own communities** ★★★★★

Past interns are carrying forward their passions and taking action in their own communities after participating in the internship. For example, over one-half of survey participants reported advocating in their communities for an issue they care about, and all five diary study participants described ways they were acting as leaders or advocates in their communities—from organizing carpools for a protest to support women’s rights to questioning leadership from local organizations about their environmental impacts—even when it felt uncomfortable.

## **LONG-TERM OUTCOMES (3+ YEARS AFTER INTERNSHIP)**

### **Mentor future generations of leaders** ★★★★★

Past interns demonstrated interest in becoming mentors to other BOHS interns or people in their communities but need structure and support to follow through. Survey and interview data indicate a few past interns are already serving as mentors in their community (e.g., supporting high school or college students in various capacities); many more are interested but haven’t taken the next step. And, a few said they are not interested because they feel they are “too young,” and they aren’t sure what they could offer others as a mentor. As it is a long-term outcome and some only recently finished their internship, it makes sense that not all past interns see themselves as mentors, yet. However, there is promising interest in structured near-peer mentorship opportunities (e.g., serving as a mentor to a current intern or speaking on a BOHS panel). Near-peer mentorship can not only deepen the experience for current interns but also help past interns start to see themselves as mentors and leaders.

### **Are confident leaders in whatever career they pursue** ★★★★★

Past interns are already serving as leaders in their academic and professional endeavors, but may not fully see themselves in that light yet. It is encouraging that the data indicates nearly all survey participants have taken on leadership roles in school or work; moreover, interview and all diary study participants were able to describe concrete examples of how they demonstrated leadership in their personal or professional lives. In contrast, the survey statement about whether the BOHS internship helped interns “understand what it means to be a leader in the workplace” was rated lower than most statements about personal experiences with the internship (mean rating of 3.9 on a scale from 1 to 5). This suggests that while past interns are taking on leadership roles, they are also still figuring out what it means for them to be a leader (understandably, this will be an ongoing, long-term process). Perhaps interns seeing others like themselves in a leadership role, for example through near-peer mentorship by past interns, could help interns see themselves more clearly as confident, capable leaders.

### **Amplify diverse women’s stories and experiences in their own way** ★★★★★

Interns’ interest in lifting up women’s stories continues well beyond the internship. Survey data indicates all participants were interested in or already amplifying women’s experiences and contributions in their work. The diary study and interview data yielded rich examples of how this happens in practice. For example, participants described heightened awareness around issues of gender in history and museums which gives them a critical lens for work in their area of interest, from data analytics to archival work. A few others who work in education described intentionally incorporating underrepresented stories into their coursework, and the ripple effect this has had on broadening their students’ perspectives on history and the world today.

# 02 Study background



## About the Study

This report presents findings from Kera Collective's evaluation of the American Women's History Initiative's (AWHI) Because of Her Story (BOHS) Internship Program. The evaluation explores intern alumni's perspectives on and experiences with the internship program, as well as the lasting effects of the program on alumni. AWHI plans to use these results as a baseline for its Long-Term Impact Study of the internship program.

The evaluation process began with developing an Impact Framework that articulated the intended impact of the internship on interns and identified measurable mid- and long-term outcomes for internship alumni. Using the resulting Impact Framework (see Appendix A), Kera used a mixed-method approach to explore the impact of BOHS on interns: remote in-depth interviews, an online survey, and a diary study. The objective of the study is to understand the extent to which BOHS internship alumni are achieving the following intended mid-term (6 months-3 years after internship) and long-term (3+ years after internship) outcomes:

- Focus their academic or professional path forward (mid-term)
- Benefit from the support of a professional network (mid-term)
- Are change-makers in their own communities (mid-term)
- Mentor future generations of leaders (long-term)
- Are confident leaders in whatever career they pursue (long-term)
- Amplify diverse women's stories and experiences in their own way (long-term)

## Methodology

The methodology for the remote interviews, online survey, and diary study are presented below.

### Survey

All past BOHS interns were invited by AWHI to participate in an online survey about the ways the internship experience benefited them as well as future plans for study or careers. AWHI sent a SurveyMonkey link to all past interns (see Appendix A for instrument). AWHI sent two reminder emails to participants to complete the survey. Questions included multiple-choice and rating scales which generated quantitative data, as well as a few open-ended and “other” response options which generated qualitative data. Quantitative data were analyzed to include frequency distributions (e.g., percentage who participated in each cohort) as well as summary statistics (e.g., mean ratings). Qualitative data were analyzed to highlight meaningful patterns and trends. Due to the small sample size, no inferential statistics were conducted.

### Remote Interviews

Kera Collective conducted remote interviews with eight past BOHS interns in July and August 2022. The goal of the remote interviews was to gather detailed feedback about the lasting impact of the internship. All past BOHS interns were invited to participate (aside from those who were already participating in the diary study, to reduce the burden of participation for those individuals). Four participated in the 2019 cohort, and four participated in the 2021 cohort. All interviews were conducted via Zoom. Kera Collective asked open-ended questions (see Appendix B for interview protocol) followed by probing questions for clarity or explanation. The interviews were not audio-recorded; the interviewer took notes, relating participants’ responses as close to verbatim as possible.

The interview data are qualitative, meaning that results are descriptive. In analyzing the data, the evaluator studied the interview notes for meaningful patterns and trends. The objectives of the study, as well as our professional experience, informed the analysis. Findings are reported in narrative, supplemented with exemplary quotations from participants. Trends and themes in the data are presented from most- to least-frequently occurring. Verbatim quotations (edited for clarity) illustrate participants’ thoughts and ideas as fully as possible.

## Diary Study

Five past BOHS interns were invited and agreed to participate in a diary study. Diary study participants were selected through conversation between Kera and AWHI to include individuals with a range of backgrounds and experiences. The goal of the diary study was to explore how interns use the skills and knowledge learned in the program as they move ahead in their studies or careers. Participants were sent six reflection prompts via text message over the course of 8 weeks (see Appendix B for prompts). Participants were sent two reminder texts to complete each prompt. They also participated in a brief interview at the end of the diary study to provide any additional context or clarification to their responses. Participants received a \$200 gift card for participating in the diary study. Results are presented in case study format which presents each participants' responses in their own words, along with a synthesis of major themes that emerged within each case study. Some responses were edited for clarity and brevity.

# 03 Survey Findings



## Participant Characteristics

All 29 past BOHS interns were invited to participate in an online survey; a total of 12 completed the survey for a participation rate of 41 percent. Participant characteristics are summarized below.

<b>Cohort</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eight participated in the 2021 cohort and four participated in the 2019 cohort</li> </ul>	
<b>Age</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ages ranged from 21 to 33 years old. The mean age is 25.</li> </ul>	
<b>Gender identity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The majority of participants identify as women</li> <li>• Two describe themselves as gender fluid and/or queer women</li> </ul>	
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Four identify as Hispanic or Latino</li> <li>• Four identify with more than one ethnicity<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Three identify as White</li> <li>• One identifies as Black</li> </ul>	
<b>Residence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants reside in many different states, including three in Texas, two in Massachusetts, and one each in Florida, Illinois, Louisiana, North Carolina, Washington, D.C., and West Virginia</li> </ul>	
<b>Highest Degree and Institution Type</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eight have Bachelor’s degrees</li> <li>• Two have Master’s degrees</li> <li>• One has a Doctoral degree</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seven attended institutions that are not affiliated with specific groups</li> <li>• Three attended Women’s Colleges</li> <li>• Two attended Hispanic-Serving Institutions</li> </ul>
<b>Family education history</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Four are the first in their family to attend a college or university</li> </ul>	
<b>Post-Internship Status</b>	<p><i>Academics</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Six are enrolled in a graduate or professional program. Fields of study include library and information sciences, aviation and aerospace sustainability, higher education, and pathology.</li> <li>• One is enrolled in an undergraduate program in history and geography.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Employment</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eight are working in a full-time positions, including roles at universities, a public school district, a public library, Walt Disney World, the U.S. Department of Transportation, and Smithsonian.</li> <li>• One is working in a part-time position at a university library.</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Including Asian or Asian American, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, and White or Caucasian.

# Internship Experience

Participants were asked to rate their personal experiences since completing the BOHS internship on a scale from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. Participants rated statement related to clarifying strengths and academic or career goals highest (mean ratings of 4.4 and 4.3, respectively). They also rated statements related to social skills in professional settings relatively high (e.g., maintaining a professional attitude under pressure; handling workplace disagreements professionally; and working with a team—mean ratings of 4.2, 4.2 and 4.0 respectively). Participants gave moderate ratings to statements about understanding how to be a leader in the workplace (mean rating of 3.9), time management skills (mean rating of 3.8) and effective communication skills (mean rating of 3.7).

<i>The BOHS internship helped me...</i>	<i>Mean Rating</i>
...identify my strengths and skills	4.4
...clarify what academic program or career pathway I want to pursue (or not pursue)	4.3
...understand how to maintain a professional attitude under pressure	4.2
...understand how to handle workplace conflicts or disagreements in a professional way	4.2
...understand how to effectively work with a team	4.0
...understand what it means to be a leader in the workplace	3.9
...practice time management and prioritizing work effectively	3.8
...understand how to communicate clearly, professionally, and effectively	3.7

# Professional Network

Participants were asked rate their statements about their professional network on a scale from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. All statements had a mean rating of 4.0 or higher. Participants rated highest the statements for building professional skills (mean rating of 4.6) and developing a supportive peer network (mean rating of 4.5) highest. They rated lowest the statements about connectedness to a community of people working to lift up diverse women’s stories (mean rating of 4.1) and maintaining connections with their cohort (mean rating of 4.0).

<i>The BOHS internship helped me...</i>	<b>Mean Rating</b>
...develop and practice professional networking skills	4.6
...develop a peer support network with other interns in my cohort	4.5
...build a positive professional relationship with my internship mentor	4.3
...expand my professional connections with leaders in the museum or cultural fields	4.3
...feel confident making new professional connections	4.1
...feel connected to a community of people working to lift up diverse women’s stories	4.1
...maintain meaningful connections with other interns in my cohort after the internship	4.0

## Most Important Skill or Lesson Learned

Participants were asked an open-ended question about the most important skill or lesson learned during the internship and how they have applied it in their work, school, or community. Nine participants responded to the open-ended question, with networking and collaboration rising to the top for most.

- **Fostering a professional network:** Seven participants said that the most important skill and lesson they learned was the importance of networking, and the positive outcomes that come with creating and nurturing meaningful relationships within the professional space. They said that networking in and outside of their workplace allows them to collaborate better, strengthen the impact of their work, and help reach their professional goals. They also described how building these connections leads to feeling supported in their work because they have stronger relationships built on mutual understanding and trust. Some noted that the internship helped them overcome the anxiety they felt surrounding networking, especially within a virtual space.
- **How to collaborate well:** Seven said they learned how to collaborate with others within a professional setting and experienced the immense value of collaboration. They described that by taking the time to get to know their teammates, they were better able to understand how their skills could best be used in projects alongside their coworkers. They noted that by collaborating with those in their workplaces with intention and knowledge of each other's passions and unique skills, they were able to have more impact on meaningful projects, enrich their work, and deepen their professional relationships.
- **Storytelling with historical data:** Two of the participants said the most important lesson from their internship was understanding the importance of storytelling within historical preservation, and how to use archival materials to enhance "equitable storytelling." They also highlighted that they learned the skill of how "read between the lines" when researching and think creatively to find unconventional sources to support their research to lift up underrepresented stories.

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Networking. I used to be very nervous about networking but sitting in on various panels and scheduling informational interviews with various Smithsonian personnel helped me overcome a lot of that anxiety. Because of that, I've met a mentor in grad school and am now planning a practicum with my mentor for this fall.

”

## Post-Internship Action

Participants were presented with a list of actions and asked to indicate their level of interest or participation in each. In the table below, higher participation and interest are represented by darker orange and lower participation and interest are represented by lighter orange. Nearly all participants said they are already taking on leadership roles in school or work. About one-half reported amplifying women’s stories or advocating in their communities for issues they care about, and one-third are interested in taking these actions. One-half have referred someone to apply to the BOHS internship and one-half are interested in referring someone. And, few have served as a near peer mention or spoken on a BOHS panel, but one-half or more are interesting in doing these things.

<b>Action:</b>	<b><i>I already do/ have done this:</i></b>	<b><i>Interested:</i></b>	<b><i>Not interested:</i></b>
Taking a leadership role in school or work	11	0	1
Amplifying women’s experiences or contributions in my work	7	5	0
Advocating in my community for an issue I care about	7	4	1
Referring someone in my network or community to apply to the BOHS Internship Program	6	6	0
Becoming a near peer or professional mentor (to a BOHS intern, or outside the program)	3	6	3
Speaking on a panel to a future BOHS cohort	1	8	3

<b>Key</b>	<b>High participation/ interest (9-12 responses)</b>	<b>Moderate participation/ interest (5-8 responses)</b>	<b>Low participation/ interest (1-4 responses)</b>
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# 04 Interview

## Findings



## Introduction

Kera Collective conducted eight remote interviews with past BOHS interns in July and August 2022 to discuss the lasting impact of the internship. Four participants were from the 2019 cohort and four were from the 2021 cohort. Results are presented below by outcomes from the Impact Framework.

## Focusing Their Academic or Professional Path Forward

In general, participants felt that selecting from a group of pre-defined internship projects enabled them to sign up for projects that aligned with their existing skills and interests, while also enabling them to develop new ones. Participants also said the skills and experiences they had while working on their internship projects informed their future professional and academic plans.

**Participants felt the internship balanced opportunities to foster existing interests and skills while also developing new ones.** Seven out of eight participants said the variety of internship projects available allowed them to apply to a project that aligned with their interests. For example, one participant described selecting a project on using machine learning tools to uncover women's stories in the archives because of their initial interest in the intersection of tech and social equity; while machine learning was new for them, their supervisor "was really supportive" and the "project allowed [them] the space" to learn new digital tools. Another similarly described being interested in their internship content area, women's military history, and was able to learn new archival skills like cataloging. For one participant, being able to come in with "experience in education and some digital content" enabled them to "specialize in one thing" around developing online exhibition content for the exhibition *Girlhood*.

**Participants felt that the skills and content knowledge developed during the BOHS internship helped them in their future professional and academic careers.** Six of the participants spoke to ways that the BOHS internship program experience informed their future work; for example, one participant said the knowledge they gained from their project working in the Smithsonian archives on women's military history was relevant to discussions in their graduate coursework on archival management. Another spoke about transferring archival digitization skills gained during their internship to their current work in a library, noting that "there's not a lot of young librarians who have that type of hands-on experience." Another participant reflected on how they developed confidence around trying a new career path and knowing "that was going to be okay."

**A few participants suggested goal setting at the outset of the internship would create accountability and focus the internship experience.** Three participants spoke to ways they felt expectations might have been managed better; two participants commented on their project expectations in particular, suggesting that the way it was described to them was not how it unfolded in practice. For example, one participant described how their project was advertised as being "super collaborative" between two different Smithsonian departments, but in reality, the project did not "feel much like a partnership between the two," which was frustrating because they wanted to develop skills in both areas. Another participant thought it would have helped at the beginning to "set out a game plan, like this is what I expect to get out of this," to establish more concrete goal setting around making professional connections."

## Benefiting From the Support of a Professional Network

All past BOHS interns spoke about maintaining their professional networks— both their lateral relationships with members of their cohort, as well as their relationships with internship mentors, supervisors, and other Smithsonian staff that they met while in the program.

### Lateral Networks

**Participants appreciated the cohort experience as a way to connect with other emerging museum professionals.** Five of the participants said they valued both the cohort format and small group meetings with the "charrettes" because it created a feeling of support and community, common experiences, and interests. One participant reflected that their favorite thing about participating as a cohort was "being able to share our nervousness and commiserate... more than anything I think encouragement." Another participant added that the charrette format was "helpful to have an even smaller group within the cohort to keep each other accountable, but also give feedback, ask questions... it was an encouraging and uplifting environment."

**Participants expressed a desire for more program-directed opportunities to informally gather as a cohort.** Seven of the eight participants felt they would have appreciated additional opportunities offered by the program to get to know each other better, with suggestions ranging from informal community dinners or mixers amongst the cohort with other SI internship programs. For example, one participant recalled the impact of participating in a dinner organized for SI Latinx interns; they felt it was "inspiring and nice to be with other young people in DC and bond over food." However, another pointed out that these opportunities should be accessible to all interns (e.g., happy hours make it hard for individuals under 21 to participate). Of course, this is all caveated by restrictions placed by Covid-19; one 2021 participant shared that their cohort's virtual dinner zooms felt "a little awkward" and "forced."

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So when you have the opportunity to congregate informally with so many people from different parts of the country— there were folks from places I had never been before with so many different experiences— having that opportunity to interact as a group would be great. More opportunities for interns to interact with each other, because it is such a fast-paced summer. We got to DC and started work the next day. There wasn't a ton of opportunity to take breath and realize all the exciting things we were doing.

”

## Keeping in Touch and Suggestions for Alumni Network

**BOHS interns said they maintain their relationships with their cohort.** Seven of the participants mentioned ways that they continue to keep in touch with updates about each other's personal and professional achievements; one shared that "it's exciting to see how we were talking about our futures then and how they've changed or if we're living up to them." Another reflected that "two of the people I'm in touch with are engaged and talking about wedding plans, like this is wild, who would have thought?" Together, participants offered several ways they keep in touch, including letter writing and social media; the most popular options in order were group texts, Instagram, LinkedIn, Zoom check in's, writing letters, and Snapchat.

**Participants also discussed cohort relationships post-internship, including various barriers to communication, as well as suggestions for an alumni network.** While most participants keep in touch, they also noted barriers to maintaining cohort relationships, ranging from those related to Covid-19, and general life busy-ness. Participants were generally in favor and excited about the idea of an alumni network, and had suggestions for what that might look like. Their ideas spanned from professional development opportunities, connecting with present interns, continued mentorship opportunities, developing online networks, and in-person and/or virtual gatherings or "reunions."

- **Professional Development:** Six interns had ideas about ways an alumni network could both support them professionally, as well as ways they could offer their expertise as past interns. These ideas ranged from general PD offered by SI, alumni-specific programming that functions as an extension of the internship's Monday programs, and alumni-driven PD that passes down experiences to current interns. For example, one participant suggested there might be sessions offered with past interns on recommendations around networking, navigating the USAjobs website, and how to "continue your career after the internship."
- **Reunion/virtual gatherings:** Five participants expressed an interest in gathering with past interns, either in person or virtually, in order to keep in touch, and see how and where interns pursue their careers post-internship. One intern suggested these could also be regional to facilitate more locally based meetups.
- **Social media presence/Listserv:** Four participants noted ways the program could maintain an online or digital presence for program alums. A few suggested Facebook, LinkedIn networks, Slack, and email chains or listservs as ways to stay connected about job openings, alum updates, and resource sharing.
- **Continued mentorship:** Two participants spoke about a desire for continued professional mentorship through an alumni network. One suggested there could be an opportunity to meet mentors from other cohorts or Smithsonian divisions. Another expressed an interest in some guidance, "not so much a pipeline, but what can I do next because of BOHS."

## Networks with Mentors, Supervisors, and other Smithsonian Staff

All past interns spoke about the value of the professional connections they made with their mentors, supervisors, and other Smithsonian employees they met during the BOHS internship.

**Participants appreciated being able to take advantage of the vast Smithsonian network.** These advantages include benefiting from the SI units, the national reputations of their supervisors, and the Friday programming that enabled them to meet mentors and other Smithsonian professionals across the different institutions. One intern said they felt “confident that if [they] reached out to anyone [they] met at the Smithsonian, they would be willing to reply.” Additionally, two interns described how the interdisciplinary nature of some of the internship projects enabled cross-departmental networking. For example one intern’s project supporting an exhibition on women fiber artists involved both the Archives and American Art as well as the Smithsonian American Art Museum.

**Participants felt professionally supported by their mentors and supervisors, and most continue to stay in touch with them.** Six of the interns spoke specifically about how beneficial their supervisors and mentors were in developing their professional networks, planning their future careers, and continued support past the internship (e.g., remaining in contact, writing letters of recommendation). One participant described their experience as “networking from an emotional side,” appreciating how supported they felt during and after the internship. This support continued after the internship ended, with participants describing exchanging emails to check in with life updates, and to schedule occasional in-person coffee chats. Email and LinkedIn were the most popular modes of communication.

**While most participants had positive experiences with their mentors, two participants were disappointed in their mentorship experience.** These participants felt their mentors didn’t understand the full scope of the responsibilities of the mentor. One participant commented that “it’s really disheartening when you have a negative mentorship experience as a mentee because it feels like you’re being exploited for your labor and not really gaining anything.” Both felt that moving forward, the internship should clearly communicate with mentors about the demands of the role to ensure mentors have the capacity to deliver on the experience.

“

Everyone had a mentor, that was really helpful in developing relationships. My manager was my mentor, and we were able to speak every week. We checked in and we talked about more than just my internship scope, we also explored my career thoughts and trajectory. It was nice to have someone guide me.

”

## Mentoring Future Generations of Leaders

To some extent, BOHS interns are interested in mentoring others; they described ways they share their expertise with others in their respective networks.

**Some BOHS interns consider themselves mentors in their communities or would like to be.** Three participants shared their current mentoring experiences in various settings with high school students, college students, and those with similar backgrounds (e.g., first generation college students) who might benefit from hearing about their Smithsonian experience. One participant described being influenced by their BOHS experience with their mentor, who “wanted to get to know me as a person... it was nice to connect on a personal level and not just feel like a temporary intern, so I’d like to carry that forward in my own mentoring.” Further, two additional participants mentioned that if the program asked them to mentor future BOHS interns they would love an opportunity like that; one participant said, “sign me up immediately!”

**Not all interns felt they were ready to serve in a mentor capacity.** Two participants said they are not yet ready to mentor others because they “feel young” and are still “developing” as professionals. They doubted they have “anything to offer someone younger” at this point in their lives.

## Confident Leaders in Whatever Career They Pursue

Each of the interns described different ways their BOHS internship experience contributed to an increased sense of confidence, both personally and professionally.

**Most of the participants felt that the internship experience helped them feel more confident in the workplace.** This sentiment ranged from confidence around pursuing networking opportunities, working independently, and generally feeling prepared for the workplace. One participant commented that the full-time, professional nature of the internship “felt like a real introduction to real work experience,” including familiarity with things like workplace expectations and a daily commute. Another noted how the program “was a confidence boost for myself,” describing with pride how they have sent friends and family to see the exhibition they worked on. Some participants also described the personal benefits of being pushed out of their “comfort zones” to try something new. Four interns described being pushed to take on challenges that were new for them, like planning a large-scale event, navigating networking in a virtual landscape, and balancing their personal lives with work responsibilities.

**A few interns spoke about developing confidence in their personal lives as a result of participating in the program.** Participants described increased confidence around being patient with themselves as they learn new skills, exploring a new city, and putting themselves out there for new opportunities. For example, one participant reflected on how it felt like “such a long shot” that they would get into the program, and that experience has served as a “reminder that you just have to keep going and keep applying and something is going to happen.”

“

I think that was probably one of my biggest takeaways from it [was] just the reminder that you just have to go for everything that you're potentially interested in. It's easy to talk yourself out of going for an opportunity, that's something women sometimes do, like I don't have all the qualifications so I'm not the best candidate. But I think you still have to apply, you never know. I'm more motivated to go for those opportunities now than I was.

”

## Amplifying Diverse Women's Stories and Experiences

All participants spoke about ways they felt the BOHS internship influenced their current ideas about amplifying diverse women's stories.

**Participants felt reaffirmed in their desire to amplify women's stories in their future careers.** Four of the participants said their experiences influenced them to pursue professional and/or academic opportunities that focus on women's stories, such as pursuing a teaching assistantship for a gender and women studies course or lifting up women's' stories through their work as a librarian. One said that participating in the internship more broadly instilled in them a focus on "telling stories that aren't always told," including women but also other underrepresented stories.

**The program instilled a critical lens through which to view women's stories and experiences (as well as their omission).** Four participants described ways the BOHS internship sharpened their critical eye around issues of gender in history and museums. For example, one participant noted how their work in the SI archives showed them firsthand "how difficult it was to hone in on women's stories because of how the system has set it up to be." Another reflected on how the program "really showed me that in whatever field that I end up in there are ways to uplift women's stories and create equity... in a lot of cases we don't always think about it but there is a huge gender gap in every sector. It is now my purpose and inspiration to reduce that gender gap."

“

Now I'm doing my MA in public policy and specializing in analytics because I want to learn more about how to use data to reduce the gender data gap and to really put consideration and thought into how we are designing experiments—data collection that reflects the needs of women.

”

# 05 Diary Study

## Findings



# Intern A Case Study

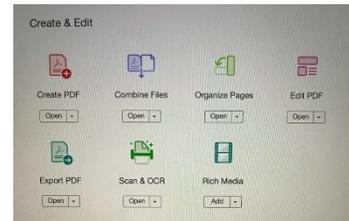
***Intern A described learning how to navigate their professional path with confidence because of lessons learned during their internship—for example openness to asking for help rather than struggle alone, comfort building new relationships with colleagues, and clarity on the type of jobs they are interested in pursuing. Developing a supportive professional network also instilled a desire in them to mentor younger generations. They continue to lift up women’s stories through their interest in historical reenactment and described advocating for environmental issues to leaders in their community.***

---

## **SKILLS AND LESSONS LEARNED**

This week, look for something that reminds you of a lesson learned or skill developed during your BOHS internship. Snap a picture or video and tell us why you chose it:

*"Doing a virtual internship with new tools pushed me out of my tech comfort zone, and now I feel more confident tackling new digital challenges – even if they seem easy to other people, I've learned that it's much better to ask for help and look up suggestions than to struggle by myself."*



## **LEADERSHIP**

Describe one way you flexed your leadership muscles or advocated for an issue you care about this week:

*"This week I attended events at organizations that I had not been at before and asked specific questions to the organization's leaders about anything from their development plans to their environmental impact."*

---

## **BUILDING NETWORKS**

This month, did you connect with anyone you met during the internship (e.g., someone in your cohort, a mentor, or another connection)? If you did, tell us about how and why you connected:

*"I met a female academic at dinner and had a wonderful conversation about her dissertation, career, and Taylor Swift! It was so great to be able to talk frankly about the challenges of (and celebrations within) academia. It even turned out that we both know a particular professor, and she encouraged me to read a book of his that relates to my interests. I appreciate her candor and kindness, and I want to make sure that I do the same for younger students."*

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**PROBLEM SOLVING**

Name an academic or professional challenge you faced (big or small) this week and how something you learned during your internship helped you worked through it:

*"One challenge I faced this week was connecting with a group of people whose schedule I'm managing for a few weeks. I overcame this challenge by reminding myself of all those times over Zoom that I needed to take that extra step to reach out, make small talk, express interest, etc. until it feels natural!"*

---

**UPLIFTING WOMEN**

This week, take a picture or video of something that inspires you to lift up women's stories in your work and tell us why you chose it:

*"I recently worked at a reenactment baking bread. This wasn't just a woman's job, but it was something that women would have done for other women, as well as children, in soldiers' camps, and I was happy to share this history with visitors."*

---

**PROFESSIONAL IMPACT**

Name one way the BOHS internship influenced the academic or professional path you are on today:

*"The BOHS internship allowed me to experience working at one of the nation's largest and most prestigious museums. Afterwards, I was able to make an informed decision about the kinds of jobs I would like to apply to, in terms of size, government vs private, mission, etc."*

---

# Intern B Case Study

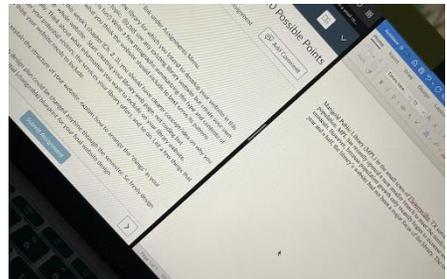
*For Intern B, the internship instilled confidence and clarity in their academic and professional pathway in the library field because of their positive experiences with professionals they encountered and the research skills they gained. The internship also equipped them with essential networking skills that have helped them in their academic pursuits. Since completing the internship, Intern B has advocated for human rights issues they care about and remains steadfast in their passion for making women’s stories more accessible in libraries.*

---

## SKILLS AND LESSONS LEARNED

This week, look for something that reminds you of a lesson learned or skill developed during your BOHS internship. Snap a picture or video and tell us why you chose it:

*"This week, I'm sharing a photo of one my Summer course assignments. This assignment requires me to use my research skills and develop the start of a proposal for updating a library website. Since BOHS, I have begun a Master in Library and Information Science graduate program. A lesson learned during BOHS was the next step in my career path. Through working with museum and library professionals conducting research for my project I got a better sense of the path I wanted to take for myself. This decision was definitely influenced by my Summer with BOHS."*



## LEADERSHIP

Describe one way you flexed your leadership muscles or advocated for an issue you care about this week:

*"This week has been a difficult one for several reasons. One way I advocated for an issue I care about this week was engaging in discourse over the overturn of Roe last week. Human rights are a major issue I take seriously. Not being silent for the sake of aiming to be neutral was a challenge for me. Not remaining silent in the face of injustice is one way I advocated this week."*

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### **BUILDING NETWORKS**

This month, did you connect with anyone you met during the internship (e.g., someone in your cohort, a mentor, or another connection)? If you did, tell us about how and why you connected:

*"I recently exchanged texts with one of my cohort members during her attendance to the ALA conference in DC. We keep in contact because we are both Library and Information Science graduate students. We bonded during our time in the BOHS cohort over plans of pursuing our Masters in this field."*

---

### **PROBLEM SOLVING**

Name an academic or professional challenge you faced (big or small) this week and how something you learned during your internship helped you worked through it:

*"An academic challenge I faced this week was finding a contact for a school assignment. One of my summer courses requires me to interview the head of a library department of my choice...however, I am new to this city and don't know many people. I used networking skills to get in touch with that librarian and ask for an interview to learn more about the role."*

---

### **UPLIFTING WOMEN**

This week, take a picture or video of something that inspires you to lift up women's stories in your work and tell us why you chose it:

*"For this week, I am choosing to share a photo of the book I am currently reading. This author is a Mexican American whose previous novel spoke to me deeply when I first read it. This is her memoir in which she speaks of how her writing has transformed life experiences that were not always happy or positive ones into a successful career where she lends a voice to underrepresented communities. Reading her work inspires me share works such as these that give voice to authors that up until very recently were not present in literature. In my work as a librarian, it is important to me to make these stories accessible to my community. It is crucial for users to see themselves reflected in their libraries through collections and programming. In turn, this may inspire them to share their stories through literature."*

---

### **PROFESSIONAL IMPACT**

Name one way the BOHS internship influenced the academic or professional path you are on today:

*"BOHS influenced my academic and professional path by allowing me to collaborate with museum professionals, librarians, and educators to achieve the goals of my project. Having the opportunity to make these connections gave me an overview of paths that I could pursue professionally. Ultimately, I chose the library field and feel confident about my ability to pursue my professional goals because of my experiences in the program."*

---

# Intern C Case Study

***Intern C described how their BOHS internship experience showed them the importance of team building and collaborative work. In particular, they described how the internship helped them see the value of including diverse perspectives when collaborating with a team. They continue to uphold their leadership skills by advocating for equitable pay at work and find ways to uplift women’s voices by keeping equity in mind within their work.***

---

## **SKILLS AND LESSONS LEARNED**

This week, look for something that reminds you of a lesson learned or skill developed during your BOHS internship. Snap a picture or video and tell us why you chose it:

*“During my internship, one skill I developed was collaboration and working with others to achieve a common goal and help a museum run smoothly. I chose this picture to represent a functioning ecosystem in which different components work together.”*



## **LEADERSHIP**

Describe one way you flexed your leadership muscles or advocated for an issue you care about this week:

*“One way I advocated for an issue I cared about to was when starting a new tutoring job this week. After completing some training and reading the handbook, I realized that some of the policies regarding equitable pay were not being followed. I flexed my leadership muscles by speaking up about this discrepancy.”*

---

## **BUILDING NETWORKS**

This month, did you connect with anyone you met during the internship (e.g., someone in your cohort, a mentor, or another connection)? If you did, tell us about how and why you connected:

*“ This month I did not connect with anyone I met during the internship.”*

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### **PROBLEM SOLVING**

Name an academic or professional challenge you faced (big or small) this week and how something you learned during your internship helped you worked through it:

*"One professional challenged I faced was learning how to utilize a new online database. During my internship I learned many types of ways that materials would be organized in the archives and online systems and my experience navigating those files helped me catch on to how to navigate this new database."*

---

### **UPLIFTING WOMEN**

This week, take a picture or video of something that inspires you to lift up women's stories in your work and tell us why you chose it:

*"The picture I chose was this mural, it is one of my favorite murals in the city. It is uplifting and positive and reminds me that we are all diverse and beautiful and each have a unique story to share. The joy on the women's faces reminds me of the joy that can take place when we care for one another as a community and it reminds me of my path to help lift people up to share their own voice."*

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### **PROFESSIONAL IMPACT**

Name one way the BOHS internship influenced the academic or professional path you are on today:

*"The BOHS internship was my first internship in the museum field and first major internship in general and it impacted my professional path greatly. On my path pursuing more art museum work, and now as a nature and writing teacher, the internship impacted my beliefs about how standing up for what I believe in will always work out and how true harmony comes from a variety of different perspectives. I remember that for one of the Monday Funday activities we were learning about museum engagement and how different people gravitate towards different learning presentations (object based, story based, people based, etc.). This is one particular example that had a big influence on me and reminds me in my work that we all perceive the world from different viewpoints, and amazing things can happen when we take different learning styles into account."*

---

# Intern D Case Study

*Participating in the BOHS internship exposed Intern D to many different career possibilities, showed them new ways to engage with women's' history in deeply personal ways, and provided them with meaningful mentor relationships. The projects they worked on were so influential that they have since incorporated some of these lessons into the undergraduate courses they teach and their graduate studies. They continue to advocate for human rights by engaging in protests alongside their community about issues they care about.*

---

## SKILLS AND LESSONS LEARNED

This week, look for something that reminds you of a lesson learned or skill developed during your BOHS internship. Snap a picture or video and tell us why you chose it:

*"What reminded me of my BOHS internship was seeing my family's photo albums. Working with BOHS taught me that preserving history is crucial...and my family's history (immigration, military drafts, etc.) is undeniably intertwined with larger historic and sociopolitical events and narratives that are preserved within the Smithsonian. So, piecing together how the events of history books impacted my own family's story, especially the women in my family, reminded me of the importance of the mission of BOHS."*



## LEADERSHIP

Describe one way you flexed your leadership muscles or advocated for an issue you care about this week:

*"Since the Supreme Court decision on Friday that got rid of federal protection of abortion, I flexed my leadership muscles by helping out one of my college organizations organize carpools to various marches across Columbus...Even though this is an example of my leadership muscles being flexed I think it is also a testimony to a collective strength as well."*

---

## BUILDING NETWORKS

This month, did you connect with anyone you met during the internship (e.g., someone in your cohort, a mentor, or another connection)? If you did, tell us about how and why you connected:

*"I recently met my mentor in North Carolina while visiting a friend...It was great to finally meet them in person. We got lunch and chatted about grad school and my future plans."*

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**PROBLEM SOLVING**

Name an academic or professional challenge you faced (big or small) this week and how something you learned during your internship helped you worked through it:

*" One academic challenge I had this past week was I had to teach my intro to women's studies class how feminists have conceptualized safety. I utilized scholar Safiya Noble's work on algorithms of oppression (who I learned about from BOHS internship) to teach the connection between search engines and influence on mass shooters."*

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**UPLIFTING WOMEN**

This week, take a picture or video of something that inspires you to lift up women's stories in your work and tell us why you chose it:

*"I chose my bookshelf and my diploma. This photo represents the knowledge that I've gained from reading these people's stories and how I continue to use their work in my own master's thesis and to inspire my students."*

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**PROFESSIONAL IMPACT**

Name one way the BOHS internship influenced the academic or professional path you are on today:

*"After completing the BOHS internship I started seriously considering a career in GLAM institutions. I also realized I didn't want to pursue a PhD at this time."*

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# Intern E Case Study

***Intern E described how the internship exposed them to a variety of career paths, helped them clearly define their professional goals, and strengthened their networking skills. The internship inspired them to lift up women's stories in their work with high school students following the internship, a passion they plan to continue as a curator.***

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## SKILLS AND LESSONS LEARNED

This week, look for something that reminds you of a lesson learned or skill developed during your BOHS internship. Snap a picture or video and tell us why you chose it:

*"During the internship, I learned that innovative research and legacies are gradually established. As I begin my career, I sometimes feel overwhelmed. I would love to have groundbreaking research and to positively impact my community. But where do I start? How will I know that I'm on the right path? I struggle with these types of questions, but then I remember a biologist I researched during my internship. Dr. Marie Fish made incredible contributions to marine biology and became a leader in the field of marine bioacoustics...[but she] had to earn her degrees and become a research assistant before she could become a world-renowned scientist. As much as I want to skip to the end and change the world, I have to start somewhere. These pictures of fish (and a turtle) symbolize this lesson"*



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## LEADERSHIP

Describe one way you flexed your leadership muscles or advocated for an issue you care about this week:

*"A recent Supreme Court ruling effectively overturned federal protection on a person's right to an abortion and placed into question a person's right to privacy under the 14th Amendment. I care deeply about these issues and believe that the various levels of government should protect those rights...I attended a march at my state's capital to voice my beliefs along with thousands of others...Throughout the days that followed, I engaged in both online and in-person conversations to share information, resources, and support in my community...I will continue to advocate for a person's right to an abortion and a person's right to privacy in the future weeks and months ahead."*

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### **BUILDING NETWORKS**

This month, did you connect with anyone you met during the internship (e.g., someone in your cohort, a mentor, or another connection)? If you did, tell us about how and why you connected:

*"This month, I connected with a few of my mentors and supervisors from the internship. I am currently seeking employment and I needed some references...I was able to reconnect with them and get updates about their work. After our email conversations, many of my mentors were more than willing to be a reference for me."*

---

### **PROBLEM SOLVING**

Name an academic or professional challenge you faced (big or small) this week and how something you learned during your internship helped you worked through it:

*"I use many strategies that I learned from professional development workshops during the internship in my current job search. One of those strategies was using the STAR Method for answering interview questions. After scheduling an interview, I looked at my notes from the workshop and refreshed my memory. On the day of the interview, I felt calm and prepared. I answered questions using the STAR Method and connected with the interview panel."*

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### **UPLIFTING WOMEN**

This week, take a picture or video of something that inspires you to lift up women's stories in your work and tell us why you chose it:

*"The semester after the internship, I taught history classes [at a high school in Texas]. In every lesson, I made sure to include the stories of women throughout history. My students were amazed as they explored the contributions of women they have not heard of. They became curious and engaged. They read biographies and sifted through databases to learn more. Many students were so inspired, they altered their career paths...In this teaching experience, I was able to witness the real-world applications of amplifying the voices of incredible women. Being a part of that process inspires me to continue this work."*

---

### **PROFESSIONAL IMPACT**

Name one way the BOHS internship influenced the academic or professional path you are on today:

*"The BOHS internship helped me focus my professional goals. At the start of the internship, I knew that I wanted to work in public history and I wanted to uplift diverse and underrepresented people. However, I did not have a solid idea of what that entailed. The internship changed that... By the end, I had narrowed my professional and academic goals...I want to design exhibitions and outreach events that focus on amplifying the incredible stories of diverse people. Thanks to the BOHS internship, I have solid professional goals and the tools to achieve them."*

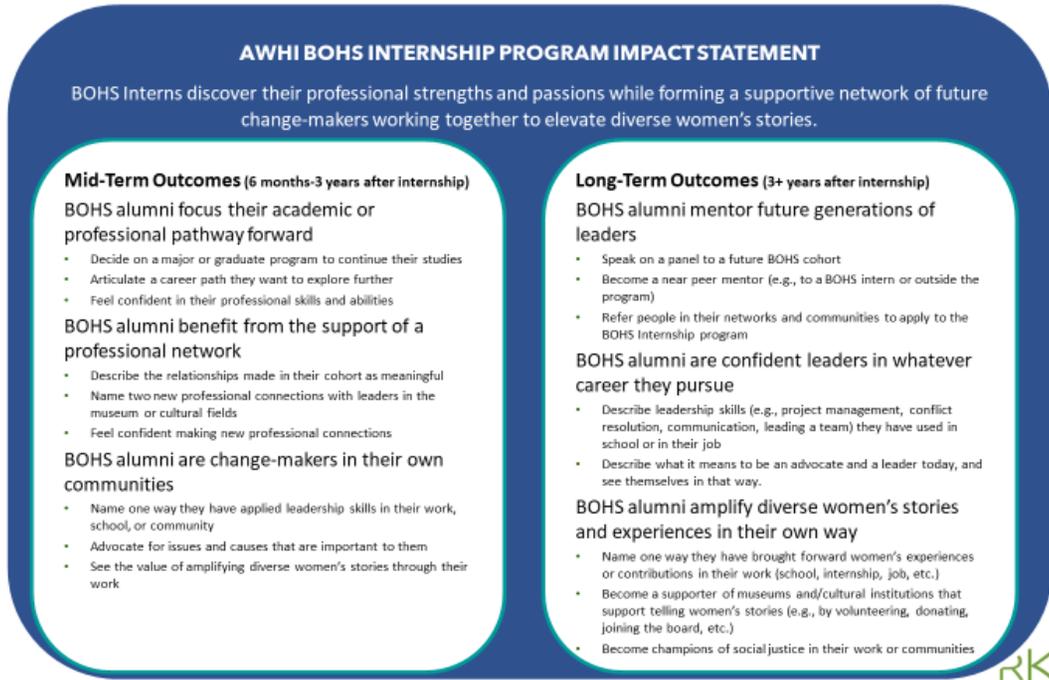
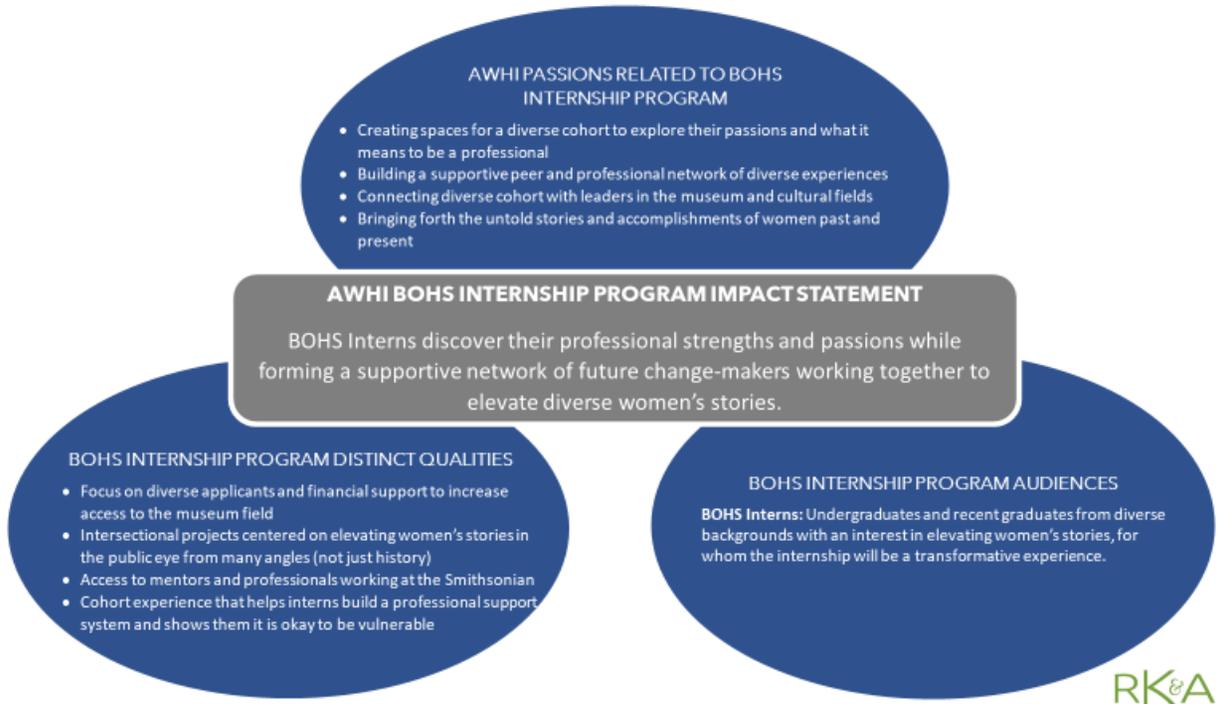
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06

# Appendix



# Appendix A: Impact Framework



## Appendix B: Instruments

### Survey Instrument

[PAGE 1]

#### About You

1. **What BOHS internship cohort did you participate in as an intern?**
    - 2019 cohort
    - 2021 cohort
  
  2. **What best describes your current academic or professional status? Select all that apply**
    - Enrolled in a 2-year college program
    - Enrolled in a 4-year college or university undergraduate program
    - Enrolled in a graduate or professional school program
    - Participating in an internship or fellowship
    - Working in a part-time position
    - Working in a full-time position
  
  3. **What is your current program of study and college/university?**
    - Program of study: \_\_\_\_\_
    - College/University: \_\_\_\_\_
    - Not applicable
  
  4. **What is your current job title and employer?**
    - Job title: \_\_\_\_\_
    - Employer: \_\_\_\_\_
    - Not applicable
-

**[PAGE 2]**

**Professional Pathways, Skills, and Networks**

Now, we have a few questions about the lasting impact of your BOHS internship experience. AWHI is interested in your honest feedback. Any feedback, positive or negative, will be useful to help AWHI better understand how to best support BOHS interns and alumni in the future.

5. **Thinking about your personal experiences since your BOHS internship, please rate the following statements on a scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree.**

The BOHS internship helped me...	Strongly disagree			Strongly agree	
	1	2	3	4	5
...identify my professional strengths and skills	1	2	3	4	5
...clarify what academic program or career pathway I want to pursue (or not pursue)	1	2	3	4	5
...understand how to maintain a professional attitude under pressure	1	2	3	4	5
...understand what it means to be a leader in the workplace	1	2	3	4	5
...understand how to effectively work with a team	1	2	3	4	5
...practice time management and prioritizing work effectively	1	2	3	4	5
...understand how to handle workplace conflicts or disagreements in a professional way	1	2	3	4	5
...understand how to communicate clearly, professionally, and effectively	1	2	3	4	5

6. **Thinking about your professional network, please rate the following statements on a scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree.**

The BOHS internship helped me...	Strongly disagree			Strongly agree	
	1	2	3	4	5
...develop a peer support network with other interns in my cohort	1	2	3	4	5
...maintain meaningful connections with other interns in my cohort after the internship	1	2	3	4	5
...build a positive professional relationship with my internship mentor	1	2	3	4	5
...expand my professional connections with leaders in the museum or cultural fields	1	2	3	4	5
...develop and practice professional networking skills	1	2	3	4	5
...feel confident making new professional connections	1	2	3	4	5
...feel connected to a community of people working to lift up diverse women’s stories	1	2	3	4	5

7. Describe the most important skill or lesson learned during the internship and how you have applied it in your work, school, or community.

[write in]

8. Below is a list of actions. Please indicate your level of interest in each. Select one option for each row.

Action	Not interested	Interested	I already do/have done this
Taking a leadership role in school or work			
Advocating in my community for an issue I care about			
Speaking on a panel to a future BOHS cohort			
Becoming a near peer or professional mentor (to a BOHS intern, or outside the program)			
Referring someone in my network or community to apply to the BOHS Internship Program			
Amplifying women’s experiences or contributions in my work			

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[PAGE 3]

**About You**

9. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_

10. What gender do you identify with? \_\_\_\_\_

11. With which US Census racial or ethnic group(s) do you identify? Select all that apply.

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- White
- Other racial or ethnic group: \_\_\_\_\_

12. What is your zip code? \_\_\_\_\_

13. Are you the first in your family to attend a college or university?

- Yes
- No

**14. What is your highest level of education?**

- Currently enrolled in college, no degree
- Associate's degree (e.g., AA, AS)
- Bachelor's degree (e.g., BA, BS)
- Master's degree (e.g., MA, MS)
- Professional degree (e.g., JD, MD)
- Doctoral degree (e.g., PhD)

**15. Did you attend any of the following types of institutions? Select all that apply.**

- Women's College
- Historically Black College or University (HBCU)
- Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI)
- Tribal College
- Not sure
- Not applicable

## Interview Guide

Hello. My name is \_\_\_\_\_. Thank you for agreeing to speak with me. This is one of several interviews being held by the American Women's History Initiative (AWHI) with Because of Her Story (BOHS) intern alumni. The goal of these interviews is to help AWHI understand your experiences as an intern and alumnus of the program so that it can better support future interns and alumni of the program like you.

I want to let you know that I do not work for AWHI. I work for a company that was hired to gather feedback for them. I'm telling you this because I want you to feel comfortable speaking with me. However, your name will not be recorded or used in our report. Your participation is completely voluntary, and you can stop at any time. Do you have questions or concerns?

### Internship Experience

1. Can you tell me about your internship project? What made you choose to work on that?
2. What was your favorite part of participating in the BOHS internship program? Why is that?
3. What about the BOHS internship program pushed you to grow the most as a person? Tell me more about that.
4. What would you change about the internship experience if you could? This could be something about the way the program was structured, your project, something you wish you would have done differently, or something else.
5. How, if at all, did participating in the BOHS internship program spark or reaffirm your desire to explore and lift up women's stories? Tell me more about that.

### Creating a Professional Network

Now we are going to shift to talking about the personal and professional networks you created during the internship.

6. BOHS is structured as a cohort program, where you participate in a program with a group of other interns. What was the best part about participating in the internship as a cohort?
7. What, if anything, would you change to strengthen the connections among the cohort during the internship?
8. The BOHS internship also aims to help interns develop a professional network with leaders in the museum and cultural sector. What about the internship experience, if anything, most helped you develop your professional network?

9. What, if anything, would you change about the program to better support future interns in developing their professional network?

### **Post-Internship Experience**

Now, we are going to talk about your experiences since finishing the internship program.

10. What is the most valuable lesson or skill from your internship that you've taken with you? This could be something that has influenced you academically, professionally, or personally.
11. How, if at all, have you been able to maintain connections formed during your internship (with your cohort, your mentor, or other professionals that you interacted with during your internship)?
  - a. What have you found works best for staying connected?
  - b. What are the biggest challenges to staying connected?
12. Mentorship is an important part of the BOHS internship program. Did your experiences in the program inspire you to become a mentor in your community?
13. What could AWHI do to continue to support you after your internship ended? Tell me more about that.
14. What is the most important feature you are looking for in an alumni program or alumni network for past interns of the BOHS Internship Program?

### **Wrap-up**

Thank you all so much for your feedback today. Is there anything that I didn't ask you about today that you'd like to share related to the BOHS internship experience?

Great! Thank you.

## Diary Study

### **Prompt 1**

This week, look for something that reminds you of a lesson learned or skill developed during your BOHS internship. Snap a picture or video and tell us why you chose it.

### **Prompt 2**

Describe one way you flexed your leadership muscles or advocated for an issue you care about this week.

### **Prompt 3**

This month, did you connect with anyone you met during the internship (e.g., someone in your cohort, a mentor, or another connection)? If you did, tell us about how and why you connected.

### **Prompt 4**

Name an academic or professional challenge you faced (big or small) this week and how something you learned during your internship helped you worked through it.

### **Prompt 5**

This week, take a picture or video of something that inspires you to lift up women's stories in your work and tell us why you chose it.

### **Prompt 6**

Name one way the BOHS internship influenced the academic or professional path you are on today.